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Tasks of the Expert Group

Approaches and mechanisms for monitoring, assessment and reporting

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note provides background information to assist the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting in carrying out its tasks. The note addresses approaches and mechanisms for the two areas of the monitoring, assessment and reporting function of the United Nations Forum on Forests that are to be addressed by the Expert Group: progress in implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action and progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests.

The note reviews Forum decisions on monitoring, assessment and reporting processes in the Forum and other international processes, instruments and organizations related to forests, highlighting approaches that may be relevant to the further development of the monitoring, assessment and reporting function of the Forum. It considers ways that the Forum might monitor and assess progress and possible reporting procedures and considerations. Finally, it addresses needs for capacity-building in countries for monitoring, assessment and reporting.

Monitoring and assessment of progress on implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action would be facilitated by the use of indicators of implementation. Linking the assessment of progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action more closely with assessment of progress towards sustainable forest

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management, using indicators of sustainable forest management, could have advantages. One option for achieving this could be to reorient reporting on implementation around clusters of IPF/IFF proposals for action based on the criteria of sustainable forest management.

Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management are recognized as a useful tool for reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management. Options for using criteria and indicators for assessing global progress towards sustainable forest management could include country reporting to the Forum, submission of progress reports from regional and international criteria and indicators processes to the Forum and compilation of a report on progress towards sustainable forest management by using other existing sources of information.

Countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups report to the Forum annually. Comprehensive reporting on implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action to the Forum at its fifth session is to be coordinated with the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

The need to build capacity in countries for monitoring, assessment and reporting on both implementation of the proposals for action and progress towards sustainable forest management is recognized. Several recommendations have been made in this regard.

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Forum on Forests, at its third session, agreed on the establishment of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Approaches and Mechanisms for Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting. The Forum agreed that the Expert Group would carry out the following tasks:

(a) Assess existing reporting requirements under relevant international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations in order to identify strengths, weaknesses and duplication in reporting processes, taking into account the relevant work undertaken by Collaborative Partnership on Forests members;

(b) Assess existing monitoring and assessment procedures in international conventions, processes, instruments and organizations related to forests in order to identify strengths, weaknesses and duplications, taking into account the relevant work undertaken by Collaborative Partnership on Forests members;

(c) Propose ways for the Forum to monitor and assess progress, based on voluntary reporting by countries, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other relevant organizations, and international and regional processes on implementing the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF)/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action; ongoing work on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management being undertaken at the national, regional and international levels; and existing data and information, as well as reporting systems and structures;

(d) Propose an outline for voluntary reporting to the Forum;

(e) Recommend options for drawing upon the reports provided to Forum sessions to identify trends and lessons learned;

(f) Develop recommendations on how to build capacity in countries for monitoring, assessment and reporting, taking into account the special needs of developing countries.

2. The results of the work of the Expert Group will be presented to the Forum at its fourth session. The present note provides background information to assist the Expert Group in carrying out its tasks.

II. Background

Scope of the work of the Group

3. When the Economic and Social Council established the United Nations Forum on Forests, it identified monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress as one of its principal functions (see Council resolution 2000/35).

4. In its resolution 1/1, the Forum agreed that its monitoring, assessment and reporting function comprises the following areas:

(a) Progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action;

(b) Progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests;

(c) Review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.

5. The Expert Group will address monitoring, assessment and reporting on the first two areas since a proposal concerning the effectiveness of the international arrangements on forests will be discussed at the fourth session of the Forum and the review itself will be carried out at its fifth session. The Expert Group may wish to take into consideration the relationship between its work and that review. The present note clarifies the links between the two.

6. The Expert Group may also wish to consider the relationship between its work and the scope of the discussions at the fourth session of the Forum on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the plan of action of the Forum, specifically related to (a) monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions[1] and (b) criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. The focus of these discussions will be on progress made, lessons learned and constraints encountered in implementing the related IPF/IFF proposals for action, many of which relate to monitoring, assessment and reporting and use of criteria and indicators at the national and subnational levels. The Expert Group should focus on monitoring, assessment and reporting at the international level — how the Forum might monitor and assess global progress in implementing the commitments made by IPF, IFF and the Forum, and what type of reporting would be needed to do this. It is important to note that some IPF/IFF proposals for action are relevant to the work of the Expert Group, including those related to:

(a) Promoting the use of internationally, regionally, subregionally and nationally agreed criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as a framework for promoting best forest practices and facilitating sustainable forest management;

(b) Using criteria and indicators by relevant organizations to improve consistency in reporting on forest assessment and sustainable forest management;

(c) Incorporating information on relevant criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management into formats for national reporting to international organizations and processes;

(d) Reducing the reporting burden on countries, streamlining forest-related reporting to international organizations and instruments and improving forest information systems;

(e) Strengthening countries' capacity for monitoring, assessment and reporting.

7. These points are areas of common concern for the Expert Group and for discussions at the fourth session of the Forum on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to monitoring, assessment and reporting; concepts, terminology and definitions; and criteria and indicators.

Recent initiatives relevant to the work of the Group

8. Several relevant expert meetings with substantial outputs have been held since the establishment of the Forum, including:

(a) An international expert meeting on monitoring, assessment and reporting on the progress towards sustainable forest management, held in Yokohama, Japan, from 5 to 8 November 2001;[2]

(b) A Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) expert consultation on the theme "Global forest resources assessment: linking national and international efforts", held in Kotka, Finland, from 1 to 5 July 2002;[3]

(c) A country-led initiative in support of the Forum on the theme, "Monitoring, assessment and reporting on lessons learned in the assessment of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action", held in Viterbo, Italy, from 17 to 20 March 2003 (see E/CN.18/2003/9, annex);

(d) An international conference on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, held in Guatemala City, from 3 to 7 February 2003.

9. The Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting was established in July 2002 in response to the Forum's request that Partnership members work to harmonize and streamline forest-related reporting to reduce the reporting burden on countries. Task Force members include the Forum secretariat, FAO, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the UNEP/World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC). Since its establishment, the Task Force has carried out a comparative analysis of its members' forest-related reporting to identify potentials for streamlining forest-related reporting and has launched the Collaborative Partnership on Forests portal on forest reporting.[4] The portal provides information on forest-related reporting to Partnership member organizations and easy access to the corresponding national reports. The Task Force is currently working on the development of a conceptual framework for international reporting on forests and options for building country capacity for monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests.

III. Existing monitoring and assessment procedures and reporting requirements under relevant international instruments, organizations and processes

10. Existing reporting requirements and monitoring and assessment procedures of the Forum and other major forest-related international instruments, conventions and processes, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Commission on Sustainable Development, FAO, ITTO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (on the Millennium Development Goals), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and regional and international processes of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management are summarized below.[5] An overview of reporting to these organizations, instruments and processes is provided in the annex.

11. The monitoring, assessment and reporting functions of the above-mentioned relevant international conventions and instruments and their use of indicators for monitoring and assessment purposes, are reviewed below; information is also provided on other forest-related reporting, and relevant points that the Expert Group may wish to consider in developing its recommendations to the Forum are highlighted.

Monitoring, assessment and reporting procedures in the main forest-related instruments, organizations and processes

United Nations Forum on Forests

12. At its first session (see E/2001/42/Rev.1, part two, chap. I.B, resolutions 1/1 and 1/2), the Forum decided that reporting to the Forum would focus on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and that a representative selection of lessons learned, achievements as well as obstacles encountered should be presented and discussed at each session of the Forum. It further decided that reporting would be voluntary and would start at the second session. It invited countries, regions, organizations, processes and relevant stakeholders to report. The Forum indicated that countries' reports might be prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

13. At its second session, the Forum requested its secretariat to submit a suggested format for voluntary country reporting on the implementation of the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action to the Forum at its third session (see E/2002/42, chap. II.B, resolution 2/1). At its third session, the Forum requested the secretariat to develop a similar format for the fourth session, one that was simple, streamlined and flexible and covered the thematic issues of the session, as well as the common items and cross-cutting issues (see E/2003/42, chap. I.D, decision 3/2).

14. Reporting commenced at the second session of the Forum, when 16 countries provided national reports. At the third session of the Forum, 37 countries and the European Community submitted national reports. The members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests reported collectively to the two sessions through the Partnership framework. Major groups submitted written reports for the multi-stakeholder dialogue of both sessions. Reports submitted by countries and major groups at the third session of the Forum focused on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the thematic issues and Forum elements that were addressed by each session.

15. National reports were used as a major source of information for the Secretary-General's reports on the thematic issues addressed by the sessions. Partnership frameworks, reports of major groups, and multi-stakeholder dialogue deliberations also helped to inform the discussions on implementation at Forum sessions.

16. The Forum will assess overall progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action at its fifth session as part of the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. The Forum included the extent to which countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other actors have made progress in implementing the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action as one of the 21 criteria for the review.

17. The Forum must take further decisions regarding monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management. At its first session, it stressed the importance of the use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as a basis for reporting on sustainable forest management (see E/2001/42/Rev.1, part two, chap. I.B, resolution 1/1).

Commission on Sustainable Development

18. A principal function of the Commission on Sustainable Development is to review and monitor progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation). Voluntary national reports to the Commission provide the basis for the monitoring and assessment of progress.

19. The United Nations Secretariat used the national reports (submitted annually on the implementation of relevant chapters of Agenda 21) and country profiles (submitted in 1997 and 2002 on the implementation of all chapters of Agenda 21) to assess the implementation of Agenda 21 at the global level in 2002.

20. National reports will be submitted to the Commission for each of the two-year "implementation cycles" during the 2003-2017 period. They will focus on concrete progress in implementation, including achievements, constraints, challenges and opportunities for the issues being addressed in that cycle. Forests will be addressed in the 2012-2013 cycle. It has not yet been decided how monitoring and assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation will be carried out between 2003 and 2017.

21. Through the Commission's work programme on indicators of sustainable development, a set of 58 indicators (including two related to forests) have been identified for possible use by countries in monitoring progress towards sustainable development at the national level.

Convention on Biological Diversity

22. The Convention on Biological Diversity requests each State party to submit national reports on measures taken to implement the provisions of the Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the Convention's objectives. The third national report (2005) will provide information on the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity, among other things. Countries are also invited to submit voluntary thematic reports in 2003, addressing success in implementation of priority actions and challenges and obstacles faced in implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity.

23. The reports submitted to the Convention provide the basis for monitoring and assessment of progress in the implementation of the Convention. An ad hoc technical expert group provides advice on the way in which the review of the implementation of the programme of work on forest biological diversity would be undertaken and to provide input to the review. Its first meeting is to be held from 10 to 14 November 2003, and it is to complete its work before the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in 2006. The review will be concluded at the ninth meeting in 2008.

24. The Convention has been working to develop (a) principles for designing national-level monitoring programmes and indicators and (b) a list of potential indicators that could be used by States parties at the national level and in national reporting, and that could also allow for regional and global overviews on the state and trends of biodiversity. The Convention encourages regional cooperation for indicator development. In its decision VI/22 on forest biological diversity, the Convention recognized existing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, including forest biological diversity, at the national and regional

levels, agreed that these should be applied where criteria and indicators are needed for the purposes of the expanded work programme, and recognized the need for further development and selection of criteria and indicators for the assessment of the status and trends of forest biological diversity at the national and regional levels.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

25. Each State party to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is required to communicate to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention the measures undertaken to implement the Convention. The content of national reports differ slightly, depending on the category(ies) into which a State party falls (see annex) and thus what its commitments are. Intergovernmental organizations and United Nations organizations are also asked to report. Monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Convention is based on these reports.

26. The Convention has identified implementation indicators to help monitor and assess progress in implementation, and is also working to identify the type of data needed to assess the status and trends of desertification (i.e., desertification indicators), as well as impact indicators to monitor biophysical, socio-economic and institutional impacts of the national action programmes developed by desertification-affected States parties. Such indicators would be useful for the purpose of assessing the impact of implementing the commitments made under the Convention.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

27. Its "national communication" is the main channel through which a State party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change informs the Convention about its activities related to implementation of the Convention. National reporting requirements for developed countries (annex I parties) are more detailed than guidelines for developing countries (non-annex I parties). Forest-related information is reported under each chapter of the national communication, such as national circumstances, national inventory of emissions and removals by sinks, policies and measures, and impacts of and adaptation and vulnerability to climate change.

28. In addition to reporting qualitative information related to implementation, States parties also prepare national greenhouse gas inventories, estimating emissions and removals of greenhouse gases for five sectors of human activities that influence sources and sinks of greenhouse gases: energy, industrial processes, agriculture, land-use change and forestry and waste. In order to carry out the national inventory, specific data on forests and forest resources are required on changes in forest and other woody biomass stocks, forest and grassland conversion, abandonment of managed lands and emissions and removals from soils. It is expected that the greenhouse gas inventory on forests will be reviewed based on the forthcoming report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, entitled "Good practice guidance for land use, land-use change and forestry". The Convention secretariat also develops and maintains a database of greenhouse gas inventories, including data on removals by sinks.

29. Land use, land-use change and forestry activities eligible under the Kyoto Protocol and the Marrakesh Accords include afforestation, reforestation, deforestation, forest management, cropland management, grazing land management

and revegetation for annex I parties, and afforestation and reforestation project activities under the clean development mechanism. These would involve additional accounting and reporting.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

30. FAO requests information from countries on a large number of variables related to forests. The information most relevant to the monitoring, assessment and reporting function of the Forum is that collected for the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and for the *FAO Yearbook of Forest Products*. In addition to these data on forest resources, forest goods and services, FAO makes information available on national forest programmes (national forest programme updates) and maintains a database (FAOLEX) on national legislation related to forests.

31. The FRA process has expanded from timber supply studies in the 1940s into the current broad assessments covering forest resources, as well as their management and uses. Following recent recommendations in international forums, FAO uses criteria for sustainable forest management as a framework for the update of the global FRA planned for 2005, and will report on variables related to: (a) the extent of forest resources/contribution to global carbon cycle; (b) forest health and vitality; (c) biodiversity function; (d) productive functions; (e) protective functions; and (f) socio-economic functions. FRA information is reported by countries through nominated national correspondents. A global meeting of correspondents was held in Rome from 17 to 21 November 2003 to discuss the design of FRA 2005 and initiate the reporting process for the 2005 report.

32. Forest products production, consumption and trade statistics are also collected by FAO. A global set is published in the *FAO Yearbook of Forest Products*.

United Nations Development Programme

33. UNDP work related to monitoring, assessment and reporting on the Millennium Development Goals may be instructive to the Expert Group in considering options for the Forum's monitoring, assessment and reporting function. To help track progress towards the achievement of the Goals, the United Nations Secretariat and other United Nations agencies and organizations have defined a set of time-bound and measurable global goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. A set of indications (including one on forests) was identified to help monitor progress towards meeting each of the targets.

34. Millennium Development Goals monitoring will be carried out at the country and global levels. At the country level, Governments are to prepare Millennium Development Goals reports at a suggested interval of every two to three years. Countries identify goals and targets relevant to themselves by adopting, adapting or adding to the global goals and targets. They report on the status of progress, challenges faced, resource requirements and monitoring capacity on each goal. At the global level, the Secretary-General is to report annually to the General Assembly on progress on a subset of the Goals, and to report more comprehensively every five years. Data for these reports are drawn from the databases for the selected indicators that are maintained by the United Nations Statistical Division. The figures in the databases are derived from international series compiled by various United Nations

agencies. Countries are not asked to report new statistics; the existing databases are used as the sources of information for monitoring and assessment of progress.

International Tropical Timber Organization

35. Parties to the International Tropical Timber Agreement are to provide statistics and information on timber, timber trade and activities aimed at achieving sustainable management of timber-producing forests. Members are asked to submit data annually on their national production, trade, supply, stocks, consumption and prices of tropical timber. These are compiled and published in ITTO's annual review and assessment of the world timber situation. Members are to supply other statistical data and specific indicators and to report on activities aimed at achieving sustainable forest management and on progress towards the ITTO year 2000 objective. Member (producer) countries are encouraged to apply the ITTO criteria and indicators for such reporting. ITTO plans to publish the first status of tropical forest management report, largely based on the national reports provided in 2004.

Regional and international processes of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

36. Some 150 countries are members of one or more of the nine regional and international processes for criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.[6] These processes develop, implement and use criteria and indicators to guide the monitoring, assessment and reporting on their forests and improve forest policies and practices.

37. There is considerable variability in the indicators identified by the various processes, but notable convergence in their criteria. The 2003 International Conference on the Contribution of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (CICI 2003) acknowledged the following thematic areas of sustainable forest management that are common to all regional and international criteria and indicators processes:

1. Extent of forest resources.
2. Biological diversity.
3. Forest health and productivity.
4. Productive functions of forest resources.
5. Protective functions of forest resources.
6. Socio-economic functions.
7. Legal, policy and institutional framework.

38. Three of the processes — the Pan-European (Helsinki), Montreal and ITTO — are at the stage of reporting data on the indicators:

(a) National reporting at the pan-European level on criteria and indicators has been done twice (in 1994-1995 in the testing phase and in 1998), and a third round of reporting is under way. Data from the 1998 reports were compiled by FAO/ECE and were incorporated into the global forest resources assessment 2000. Data from the current reporting will be incorporated into the global forest resources assessment update for 2005;

(b) In 2003, the members of the Montreal Process developed their first country forest reports on the sustainable management of their forests, using Montreal Process criteria and indicators. The *Montreal Process First Forest Overview Report 2003* presents some of the data found in the country reports;

(c) Reporting using the ITTO criteria and indicators to assess progress towards the year 2000 objective (see above).

39. The other criteria and indicators processes — the Tarapoto proposal, the African Timber Organization, the African dry-zone process, the Near East process, the dry forest Asia initiative and the Lepatérique process — are not at the stage of reporting yet.

Conclusions regarding international monitoring, assessment and reporting related to forests

40. The following key conclusions can be drawn about monitoring, assessment and reporting in the above-mentioned instruments, organizations and processes:

(a) Reporting to the Forum has focused on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. The country reporting has benefited from the simple, streamlined and flexible format that covers the thematic issues of each session, as well as the common items and cross-cutting issues. Reporting to other instruments similarly focuses largely on actions taken and progress made in implementing their respective commitments. The information provided is largely descriptive;

(b) The Forum has not made any specific decision regarding monitoring, assessment and reporting more broadly on progress towards sustainable forest management;

(c) Countries report quantitative data on forest resources and forest goods and services to FAO and ECE for the global forest resources assessment, to FAO and ITTO on forest products, to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in conjunction with greenhouse gas reporting, and to the three criteria and indicators processes that are at the reporting stage;

(d) Several bodies or instruments (e.g., the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Commission on Sustainable Development) have identified or are in the process of identifying, sets of indicators for use at the national level and in some cases at the global level. The indicators may be for monitoring and assessing progress in implementation (implementation indicators) or for monitoring and assessing the situation and trends on the ground, which help indicate the impact of the actions taken;

(e) Developments that could facilitate assessments of progress towards sustainable forest management and help streamline related reporting include the following: (i) a global understanding has emerged of what constitutes sustainable forest management, as reflected in the thematic areas of sustainable forest management that are common to all regional and international criteria and indicators processes; (ii) three criteria and indicators processes, together involving 84 countries, are now reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management in their region or eco-region; and (iii) criteria for sustainable forest management will be used as a framework for the FAO global forest resources assessment update 2005;

(f) In most cases, monitoring by an instrument is based on reports submitted to the body. However, in the case of the Millennium Development Goals, monitoring of global progress is based on existing data series compiled by United Nations agencies, thus saving countries from having to report the data a second time;

(g) Various types of global assessments related to forests have been carried out under the above-mentioned instruments, organizations and processes:

(i) Periodic reviews of implementation of the international instrument (done by all instruments);

(ii) Assessments of the status and trends of forest resources, goods and services, including the FAO global forest resources assessment and *Yearbook of Forest Products* and the ITTO *Annual Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation*;

(iii) Assessments of progress towards sustainable forest management under criteria and indicators processes, including the *Montreal Process First Forest Overview Report 2003* and ITTO's forthcoming *Status of Tropical Forest Management Report* represent assessments of progress towards sustainable forest management.

IV. Considerations regarding ways the Forum might monitor and assess progress

Monitoring and assessment of progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action

41. The IPF/IFF proposals for action were targeted at countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and other international and regional organizations and processes and major groups, all of which have a role in monitoring and assessment of progress in implementation.

42. Progress in implementing a subset of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, related to the thematic issues of the session, was assessed at the second and third sessions of the Forum and will be assessed at its fourth session. The corresponding Secretary-General's reports provide an overview of the situation globally, drawing on national reports and other sources of information, including from Collaborative Partnership on Forests members. In 2003, major groups were invited to provide information related to implementation to the Forum secretariat at the same time as countries submit their national reports, so that the Secretary-General's reports to the Forum at its fourth session can better reflect the experiences of major groups.

43. A comprehensive assessment of the implementation of all the IPF/IFF proposals for action is expected to be part of the review of effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests at the fifth session of the Forum. One of the 21 criteria for the review is the extent to which countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and other actors have made progress in implementing the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action. The Expert Group may wish to develop recommendations on how and when these actors would be involved in the assessment process, which could be considered by the Forum in its deliberations at its fourth session on the process for the review of the effectiveness.

44. The monitoring of progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action could be facilitated by the use of indicators. Some indicators could be identified in the process of the review of the effectiveness through the provision of quantifiable benchmarks on the 21 criteria for the review by countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups. However, the Expert Group may wish to make recommendations on how a list of possible indicators for the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action could be developed for the consideration of the Forum.

45. Another issue that the Expert Group may wish to consider is the clustering of the IPF/IFF proposals for action for the purposes of monitoring and assessment of progress in implementation. Implementation of the proposals for action is intended to contribute to sustainable forest management. Currently, they are clustered around Forum elements to facilitate discussion of implementation at Forum sessions. This makes it difficult to make a link between progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action and progress towards sustainable forest management. Organizing monitoring and assessment on implementation around clusters of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the criteria of sustainable forest management, with a linkage to Forum elements, could help indicate whether actions taken are having a positive impact on the ground.

46. The Expert Group may wish to consider the following options for the assessment of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action at the fifth session of the Forum:

(a) Countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups could be asked to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to themselves, drawing upon any relevant assessments they have carried out to date;

(b) Countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups could be asked to assess progress using a set (or sets) of indicators for this purpose;

(c) An assessment of progress in implementation at the global level, drawing upon the assessments made by countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups, could be made, organized by criteria for sustainable forest management, and could use a set (or sets) of indicators.

Monitoring and assessment of progress towards sustainable forest management

47. Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management were developed as tools for forest policy development, and among other things, to monitor and assess progress towards sustainable forest management at the national and subnational levels, and are widely seen as a means of monitoring and assessing sustainable forest management at the regional and global levels. IPF and IFF encouraged countries to develop and implement criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management as a basis for reviewing, monitoring, assessment and reporting national trends in the state of forests, as well as progress on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

48. The Expert Group may wish to consider options for the Forum to use criteria and indicators for monitoring sustainable forest management. One option would be to use a global set of criteria or a global set of criteria and core indicators based

upon those in existing regional and international criteria and indicators processes. Another option would be to encourage monitoring and assessment of progress at the regional or eco-regional level through existing criteria and indicators processes. This would require continued efforts to strengthen the capacity of countries to use criteria and indicators for monitoring and assessing progress.

V. Considerations regarding an outline for voluntary reporting to the Forum and options for drawing on the reports to identify trends and lessons learned

Reporting on progress in implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action

49. The table gives a picture of reporting to the Forum between 2002-2004 by countries, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups. It also indicates possible options for these entities to report to the Forum, based upon the discussion of monitoring and assessment described in section IV above.

Current reporting and options for reporting in 2005 to the United Nations Forum on Forests

Entity	*Reporting to the Forum in 2002, 2003 and 2004*	*Options for reporting in 2005*
Countries	National reports on the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the thematic issues of each Forum session (2002, 2003, 2004)	Report of national implementation of all relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action Options: • Compilation and updating of existing information from national reports to the Forum • National reporting for the review of the effectiveness, from which information on implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action could be extracted
Major groups	Reports for the multistakeholder dialogue (2002, 2003, 2004)	Report of national implementation of all relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action
Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations	Collaborative Partnership on Forests framework (2002, 2003, 2004)	A report on implementation of all IPF/IFF proposals for action and Forum decisions related to Collaborative Partnership on Forests members — compiled for the review of the effectiveness Collaborative Partnership on Forests framework 2005 reporting on joint Collaborative Partnership on Forests members' activities and summarizing information provided for the review of the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests

50. The suggested formats for national reporting to the third and fourth sessions of the Forum focus on the thematic issues of each session and the common and cross-cutting items in the context of the thematic issues. The format was explicitly designed to elicit experiences and lessons learned in implementation as well as to identify constraints and emerging issues. The suggested reporting format provides a basis for the identification of lessons learned, but the identification of trends is more difficult. The identification of trends could be facilitated by the adoption of indicators and subsequent reporting against the indicators. Developing a means of being able to electronically sort the information in national reports, all of which are made available on the Forum web site, would also facilitate identifying lessons learned and trends.

Reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management

51. The monitoring and assessment of progress towards sustainable forest management at the global level rely upon data and information from countries, provided either directly or indirectly. Reporting to the Forum at its fifth session could be considered so as to have a base for monitoring from then on. There are at least three different options for reporting to the Forum on progress towards sustainable forest management during the 2000-2005 period, as follows:

(a) Countries could report to the Forum on a global set of indicators for sustainable forest management, on the basis of which the Forum secretariat could prepare a report on the global situation;

(b) The criteria and indicators processes that are at the stage of reporting could provide their reports to the Forum;

(c) A report of global progress towards sustainable forest management could be compiled by the Forum secretariat based on existing information.

Issues to consider for future reporting related to forests

52. The periodicity of country, Collaborative Partnership on Forests members and major groups reporting to the Forum, as well as the content of their reports submitted to Forum sessions, are determined by the Forum's multi-year programme of work. The periodicity and content of future reporting on forests will have to be examined in the light of decisions made at the fifth session of the Forum regarding future international arrangements on forests.

53. Decisions related to future reporting on forests should take into consideration the opportunities for streamlining reporting, as stressed by the Forum. The areas for potential streamlining of reporting or reducing the burden of reporting could include:

(a) Information on implementation of commitments made;

(b) Information on forest resources, products and services, as well as on forest-related policy and institutional frameworks.

A successful example of a joint questionnaire is the ITTO/ECE/FAO/Statistical Office of the European Communities joint forest sector questionnaire, in which countries provide the information on production and trade of wood products only once but the organizations involved use the information in various ways for reporting to their own constituencies. Drawing from a common set of information

will not only reduce the reporting burden on countries but enhance consistency in the data and information.

VI. Capacity-building in countries for monitoring, assessment and reporting

54. IPF and IFF recognized the need to strengthen capacity for national data collection, analysis and reporting, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, with the primary objective of improving decision-making and policy and programme development related to forests (see E/CN.17/1997/12, para. 115 (c); and E/CN.17/2000/14, para. 17 (a)). They also identified the need for greater coordination and cooperation within and among countries and with international organizations and instruments for periodic and timely collection, review, synthesis and utilization of forest-related information.

55. Various efforts are being made to strengthen capacities in developing countries to monitor, assess and report on forests. Information will be provided in the report of the Secretary-General to the Forum at its fourth session on monitoring, assessment and reporting, concepts, terminology and definitions. Some examples include:

(a) FAO assists developing countries in strengthening their capacity in monitoring, assessment and reporting through the global forest resources assessment programme, regional forest sector outlook studies, various regional criteria and indicators processes, and, along with other partners, through the national forest programme facility;

(b) ITTO has funded projects in member countries to assist in the development of national forest statistical information systems, has conducted national training courses in the implementation of the ITTO criteria and indicators, and has provided support to countries to prepare their first national reports using the criteria and indicators-based reporting format;

(c) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has supported capacity-building for information collection, analysis and dissemination for forest-related carbon inventories;

(d) The Centre for International Forestry Research has played a significant role in capacity-building through its work on criteria and indicators, including through country-level testing and training;

(e) The World Bank has supported capacity-strengthening efforts for forest data and information through projects in many countries;

(f) The Global Environmental Facility has provided funding to strengthen country capacity in the collection, dissemination and analysis of forest information as a component of projects related to biodiversity, climate change and land degradation;

(g) UNDP is providing technical support to countries for monitoring progress and preparing Millennium Development Goal reports and helps them seek financial assistance for the preparation and distribution of the reports.

56. Despite these and other efforts, recognition of the need for intensified efforts to strengthen countries' capacity in monitoring, assessment and reporting is

reflected in several IPF/IFF proposals for action and Forum resolutions (see E/CN.17/1997/12, paras. 89 (b) and 115 (c); E/CN.17/2000/14, paras. 17 (a) and (e) and 19 (b); E/2001/42/Rev.1, part two, chap. I.B, resolutions 1/1 and 1/3; and E/2003/42, chap. I.C, resolution 3/2). Three recent meetings have made recommendations on strengthening country capacity related to inventory of forest resources and forest-related monitoring and assessment: CICI 2003; a meeting of the working group of the Montreal Process held in Quebec City in September 2003; and an expert consultation held in Kotka, Finland, in July 2002[7] (see box).

Recommendations emanating from recent meetings related to strengthening country capacity in monitoring, assessment and reporting

- Countries with limited capacity should consider starting with an easily measured and understood core set of indicators and expand gradually to cover other indicators of sustainable forest management.
- Countries and criteria and indicator processes should seek support for their work on criteria and indicators through FAO, ITTO, the Global Environment Facility and other relevant organizations and mechanisms. In this regard, the donor community should support the efforts of developing countries, including by providing financial support, technology and know-how.
- Criteria and indicator processes and their member countries should strengthen cooperation, including South-South and North-South cooperation, by sharing experience and know-how, such as through joint meetings, workshops, ministerial conferences, e-mail networks and other appropriate mechanisms.
- Countries and processes should use existing mechanisms and forums to enhance collaboration and coordination among the criteria and indicator processes, including to fostering capacity-building.
- Criteria and indicators processes should review, refine and share data, and should develop strategies to help countries mobilize resources to collect needed data.
- Criteria and indicator processes should increase communication, collaboration and cooperation among their members.
- Universities and other educational institutions should be encouraged to incorporate the latest information on sustainable forest management in their curricula and provide skills for developing and implementing criteria and indicators, including stakeholder participation, conflict management and public outreach.
- National and international institutions should carry out or facilitate research on criteria and indicators that are difficult to assess.

57. Most of these recommendations concern monitoring, assessment and reporting on forest resources and goods and services. Strengthening capacity for monitoring, assessment and reporting of implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action is also needed, including the capacity to carry out assessments involving a range of stakeholder groups at various levels. Such efforts at capacity-strengthening could be carried out in conjunction with efforts to develop, strengthen and implement national forest programmes.

VII. Conclusions

58. **The following conclusions can be drawn from the present note:**

(a) **Assessment of progress in the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action has been reflected in Secretary-General's reports to Forum sessions on thematic issues, using reports to the Forum, among other sources of information. An assessment of global progress in implementation of all the IPF/IFF proposals for action is expected to be carried out in conjunction with the review of the effectiveness that will be conducted at the fifth session of the Forum;**

(b) **Forest-related monitoring, assessment and reporting is also carried out by several international instruments, organizations and processes. Their approaches to monitoring, assessment and reporting procedures are instructive for the further development and implementation of the monitoring, assessment and reporting function of the Forum;**

(c) **The output of several relevant expert meetings held since the establishment of the Forum and the work of the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests provide useful background for the consideration of the Group;**

(d) **Two general types of information are reported to the other forest-related instruments, organizations and processes: (i) measures taken to implement the commitments of the international agreements or instruments and (ii) data on forest resources, products and services, as well as information on forest-related policy and institutional frameworks;**

(e) **National reporting to most international instruments is descriptive, focused on implementation of commitments. Efforts are under way to identify quantifiable indicators that can help monitor and assess progress in implementation and the impact of the actions taken;**

(f) **Assessment of the implementation of international instruments is based mainly on national reports submitted to the bodies. The United Nations assessment of progress in the Millennium Development Goals, however, is based on existing sources of information;**

(g) **Reporting to the Forum has focused mainly on progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, clustered around the thematic issues and Forum elements, which are addressed at each Forum session;**

(h) **The suggested format for voluntary national reporting to the Forum is conducive to identifying lessons learned in implementation of the IPF/IFF**

proposals for action. Use of indicators in reporting could facilitate the identification of trends in implementation;

(i) Monitoring and assessment of progress in implementation would be facilitated by the identification of a set of quantifiable indicators that could be used for the purposes of monitoring implementation;

(j) The Form has recognized criteria and indicators as a useful tool for reporting on progress towards sustainable forest management and various expert meetings have identified options for using criteria and indicators for assessing global progress in sustainable forest management. Options include (i) country reporting to the Forum on a global set of indicators for sustainable forest management; (ii) criteria and indicators processes that have compiled reports would submit them to the Forum; and (iii) a report of global progress towards sustainable forest management would be compiled, using existing information;

(k) Linking the assessment of progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action more closely with assessment of progress towards sustainable forest management would have advantages. This could be achieved by orienting monitoring, assessment and reporting on implementation around clusters of IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the criteria of sustainable forest management;

(l) Building capacity in countries, particularly developing countries and countries with economies in transition, is needed for monitoring, assessment and reporting on both implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and progress towards sustainable forest management.

Notes

[1] The discussions will build upon the deliberations and decisions of the Forum at its second session concerning concepts, terminology and definitions (see E/CN.18/2002/8 and E/2002/42).

[2] See Japan Forestry Agency, "Proceedings of an international expert meeting on monitoring, assessment and reporting on the progress towards sustainable forest management, 5-8 November 2001, Yokohama, Japan" (2002).

[3] FAO, "Proceedings of the expert consultation on the theme 'Global forest resources assessments: linking national and international efforts'", Kotka, Finland, 1-5 July 2002 (http://www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/forestry2/index.jsp?siteId=1320&langId=1&sitetreeId=4180).

[4] See http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar.

[5] For a more exhaustive review of forest-related reporting to international instruments and organizations, see S. Braatz, "National reporting to forest-related international instruments: mandates, mechanisms, overlaps and potential synergies", FAO, loc. cit.

[6] For an overview of progress of regional and international criteria and indicators processes, see M. Simula, "Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management: overview of progress and issues", FAO, loc. cit.

[7] FAO, loc. cit.

Annex

National reporting on forests to international organizations, instruments and processes

Organization or instrument	*Report reporting*	*Periodicity/date(s) of issue*	*Content of reports*
Commission on Sustainable Development	Country profiles	1997, 2002	Status of decision-making structures, capacity-building, information, research and technology, financing, and international cooperation related to all Agenda 21 chapters
	National reports	Annual from 1993-2002 Biennial from 2003-2017	Status of implementation of the Agenda 21 chapters related to the themes of the Commission session
		National reports on forests were provided in 2000 (eighth session); forests will next be on the Commission's agenda in 2012-2013	National reports on forests in 2000 included information on current situation of sustainable forest management; progress in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action; policy and legal framework; implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management; information dissemination
Convention on Biological Diversity	National reports	Every four years (1997, 2001, 2005, etc.)	Implementation of the articles of the Convention and related decisions of its Conference of Parties addressed to States Parties First national report: general measures for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity Second national report: assessments of implementation of the Convention's thematic programmes, including on forest biological diversity, and cross-cutting issues Third national report: as second report, including information on implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity

Organization or instrument	*Report/reporting*	*Periodicity/date(s) of issue*	*Content of reports*
	Thematic reports	Varies by thematic programme	I. Implementation of thematic programme areas of the Convention
		Thematic reports on forest programme: 2001, 2003	II. 2001: implementation of the work programme on forest biological diversity 2003: implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity, including priority actions; successes; challenges; and impediments
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Global forest resources assessment	Every five years (1995, 2000, 2005, etc.)	Data on a wide range of variables related to forest resources, forest goods and services; data published in the global forest resources assessment report
	Joint forest sector questionnaire	Annual	Forest products production, consumption and trade statistics; data published in the FAO *Yearbook of Forest Products* and FAOSTAT
International Tropical Timber Organization	Joint forest sector questionnaire	Annual	Forest products production, consumption and trade statistics for ITTO producer and consumer countries; data published in the ITTO *Annual Review and Assessment of the World Timber Situation*
	Reports on ITTO criteria and indicators	Biennial (2002/2003, etc.)	Data and information on the ITTO national and forest management unit — level criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management of natural tropical forests
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	National reports	• African affected parties (1999, 2002, 2004) Other affected parties (2000, 2002, 2006)	• Implementation of national action programmes and joint, subregional and regional action programmes: information on implementation

Organization or instrument	*Report/reporting*	*Periodicity/date(s) of issue*	*Content of reports*
		• Developed country parties (1999 and/or 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006)	• Unaffected: consultative processes and partnership agreements; measures to support preparation and implementation of action programmes; affected: strategies and priorities to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, and any relevant information on their implementation
		• Intergovernmental organizations (1999 or 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006)	• Actions taken to facilitate implementation
		• United Nations organizations (1999 and/or 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006)	• Actions taken to facilitate implementation
United Nations Development Programme	Millennium Development Goals reports	Flexible: at least once every 2 to 3 years suggested; the first report requested by 2004	Development context; information for each goal chosen on status of progress (including data on indicators), major challenges, resource requirements, capacity for monitoring progress
United Nations Forum on Forests	National reports	Annual (2002, 2003, 2004, etc.)	Progress lessons learned, constraints encountered in implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to the Forum elements or thematic issues addressed at the session
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	National communication	The main reporting years for annex I parties under the Convention were 1994 (within six months of the entry into force of the Convention), 1997 and 2001, for the first (initial), second and third communications, respectively. The fourth national communication will be provided in 2006. Non-annex I parties were requested to make their initial communication within three years of the entry into force of the Convention	Annex I parties: report of implementation of commitments under articles 4.1 and 12, including greenhouse gas inventory information; policies and measures; vulnerability assessment, climate change impacts and adaptation measures; financing, technology transfer, research and education. Non-annex I parties: report as stated in article 12.1 of the Convention, information covering a national greenhouse gas inventory, a general description of steps taken or envisaged to implement the Convention and

Organization or instrument	*Report/reporting*	*Periodicity/date(s) of issue*	*Content of reports*
		for that party, or depending by the availability of financial resources. However, least developed countries can make their initial communications at their own discretion. The frequency of future non-annex I communications will be considered at the ninth meeting of the Conference of Parties (December 2003)	any other relevant information to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention
	National greenhouse gas inventory	Annual	Greenhouse gas emissions and removals, including those from land-use change and forestry (changes in forest and other woody biomass stocks; forest and grassland conversion; areas and rate of regrowth of abandoned land; CO^2 emission/removals from soil)